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Management Framework Plan

PROPOSED DECISIONS

Overland Unit

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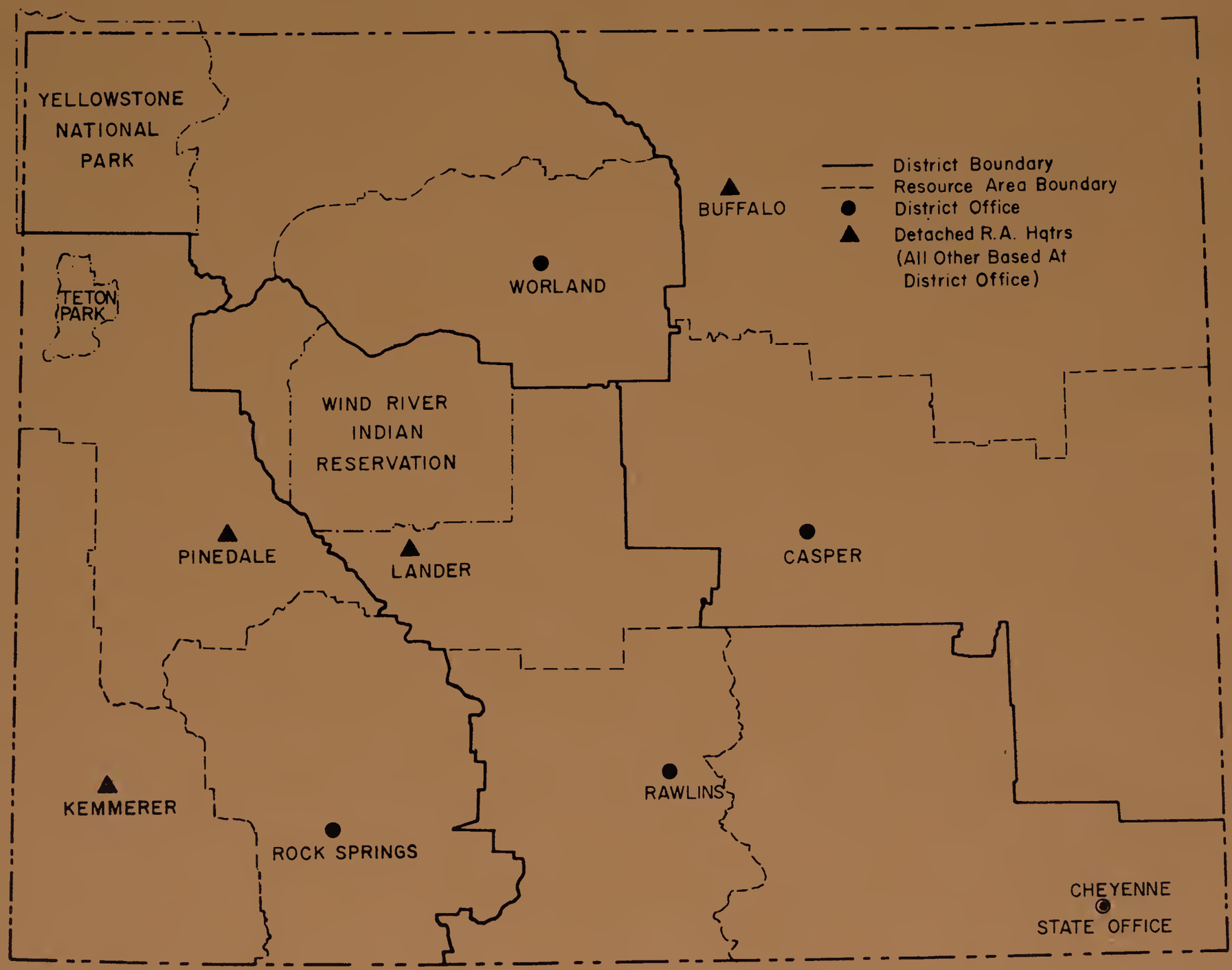

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The purpose of this brochure is to summarize the land use decisions reached for the Overland Unit Management Framework Plan (MFP).

Because of the large number and complexity of the decisions, it is impossible to present all of them in this summary. We have, therefore, summarized only the significant decisions in each resource activity.

The complete plan, with all related documents, is available at the district office in Rawlins. You are invited to visit and review it at your convenience. My staff and I are available to discuss the decisions and assist you in reviewing the document.

Again I thank all the persons, organizations, and governmental agencies which contributed so significantly to this project. Your assistance was invaluable in completing resource inventories, developing future land use recommendations, and commenting on these recommendations as well as the decisions for use of these National Resource Lands.

Fred Wolf

Fred Wolf
District Manager

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OVERVIEW

This brochure represents a revision and consolidation of several previous Management Framework Plans (MFPs) which were prepared prior to 1973. The revision was needed to provide more detail for the environmental statement on coal leasing.

This plan will serve as a guide for the surface management of the National Resource Lands (NRL) as well as the Federal mineral estates, some of which lie under privately owned surface lands.

The plan includes a narrative and graphic display of the land use decisions supported by rationale and summary of public input for each program (lands, minerals, range, forestry, watershed, recreation, and wildlife).

The management framework plan is a working document. It is a guide for day-to-day activity. The planning decisions allocate resources and land uses, thereby resolving and defining use conflicts. Program objectives and land use allocations set forth in the MFP provide a framework for developing program action plans such as management of: wildlife habitat, grazing, wild horses, minerals, recreation, etc.

Final planning decisions are subject to revision at any time in response to changing conditions or demands. Significant revisions will involve public input and review.

Public participation is an integral part of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) planning process. This process requires that all interested citizens be given an opportunity to express their views and desires, raise specific issues, and explore situations in the various planning areas.

Public involvement for the Overland MFP began in the spring of 1976 with individual contacts throughout the area to gather information and to acquire recommendations concerning future land use. Future planning was discussed with special interest groups, including the ranchers in the unit, in November 1976.

The BLM published a full-page advertisement on November 23, 1976, to summarize the major issues involved in the unit. The ad appeared in the Rawlins Daily Times. Copies of this ad were mailed with other planning information to all identified interest groups and individuals. A news release was issued in conjunction with the advertisement and the direct mailing. News articles appeared in all of the newspapers in the district, as well as on the electronic media newscasts.

An open house and workshop was held in Rawlins on November 30 and December 1, 1976. These meetings were well attended by a wide cross-section of the public and industry. Approximately 150 people were involved at the workshop and contributed to many recommendations on eleven major issues. The workshop was well covered in the news media.

There were some 60 written recommendations on land disposal, coal leasing, oil and gas development, range management, watershed protection, off-road vehicle use, historic trails, wildlife habitat, etc. Group comments covered these same issues.

On December 10 the district presented our proposed land use decisions, with a summary of public comment, to our Multiple Use Advisory Board for their review. In mid-December we met with Sweetwater and Carbon County Commissioners, their Planning Commissions and Planners to review the planning documents. Many sessions also were held with service clubs throughout the area. Meetings to discuss the proposed decisions were held with Game and Fish Department personnel and 20 other state agency representatives.

Fred Wolf

Fred Wolf
District Manager
Rawlins District
April 8, 1977

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Overland Planning Unit contains nearly 3.2 million acres of land, 1.9 million acres (58%) of which is National Resource Land (NRL) administered by the BLM. The land ownership pattern is very diverse. For example, the area west of Baggs, Wyoming is virtually all NRL. The area north and east of Baggs along the Medicine Bow National Forest exhibits mixed ownership patterns. Large tracts of state and privately owned lands are intermingled with the NRL. Almost all of the northern two-thirds of the planning unit is in a "checkerboard" land ownership pattern. Every other section of land is privately owned. There are approximately 150,000 acres of private land on which mineral rights were reserved to the federal government when the land was transferred to private ownership.

Topography ranges from steep, rugged hills and mountains, and high rims to rolling hills and flat bottom lands. Major land features are Atlantic Rim, The Rawlins Uplift, Haystack Mountains, Separation Flats, Middlewood Hill, Adobe Town, and the Delaney Rim. Large areas of undeveloped, unfenced open space exist throughout the planning unit.

Predominant vegetation types are sagebrush, greasewood, and saltbush. The sagebrush vegetation type covers approximately three-fourths of the planning unit.

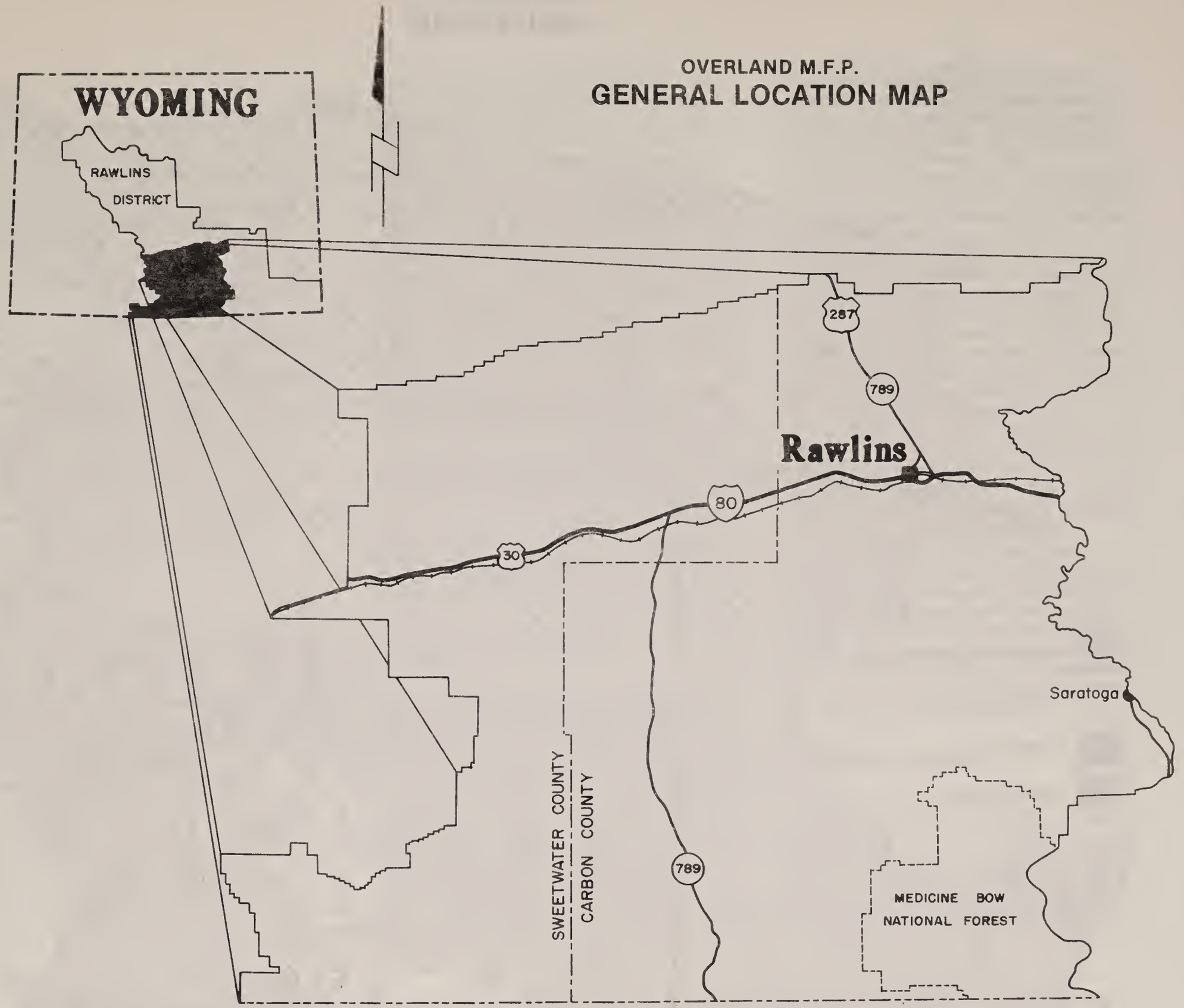
Large populations of wildlife inhabit the planning unit. Pronghorn antelope, mule deer, and elk are the principal big game species. These highly significant wildlife values, coupled with open space and a sparse human population, figure prominently in the way of life enjoyed by area residents.

The Overland Planning Unit has a population density of slightly less than three people per square mile, compared with nearly four per square mile for the State of Wyoming as a whole. Rawlins, the largest community in the planning unit, has a population of approximately 12,000.

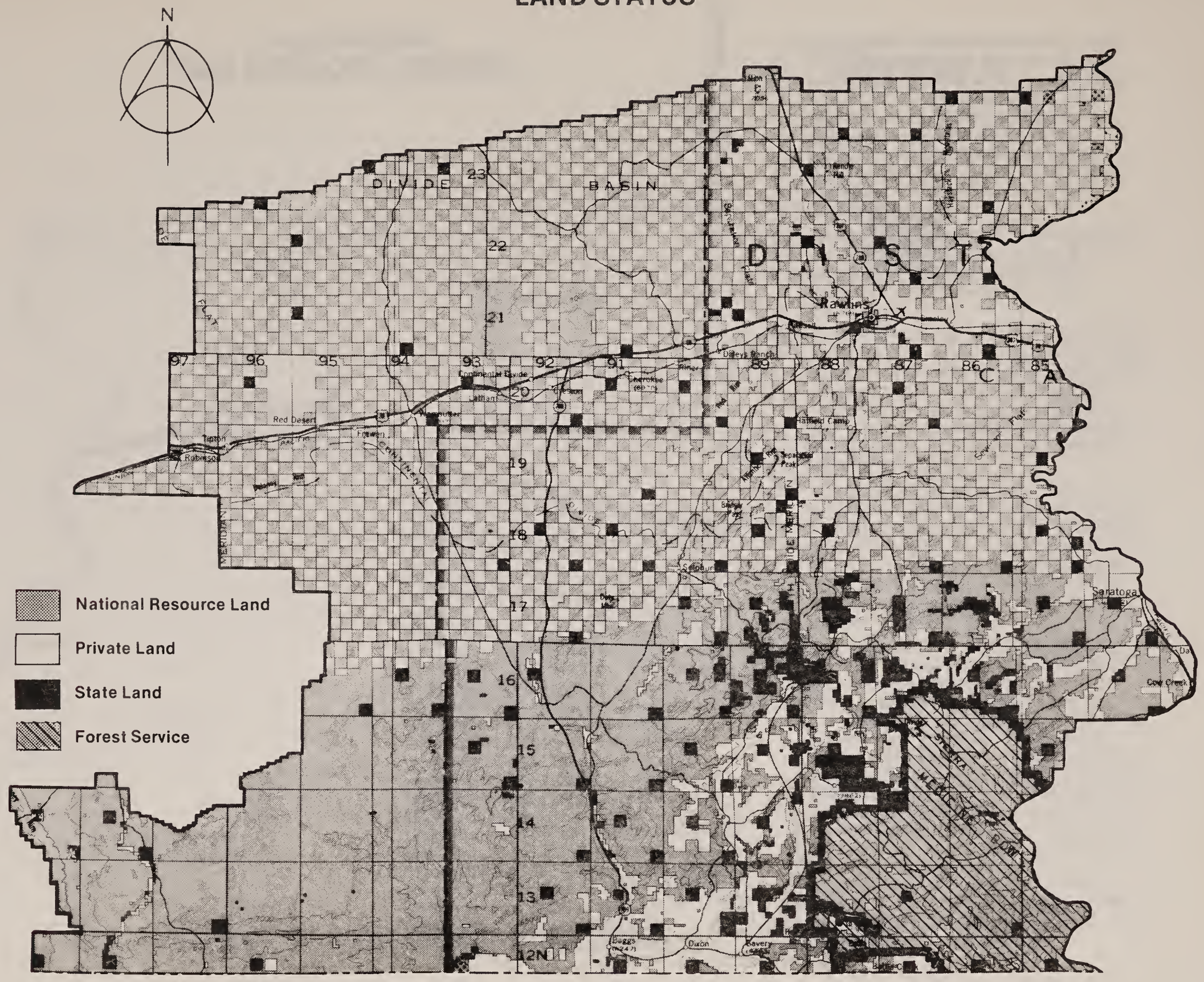
The local economy is heavily dependent on the exploration, development, and production of minerals. A large part of the manufacturing sector of the economy is devoted to processing minerals (oil and gas). The economic dependence on minerals is increasing relative to the development of industries such as: low sulphur coal, uranium, and oil and gas deposits. The importance of energy minerals in the Overland Planning Unit to the local economy, as well as to the nation as a whole, is expected to continue long into the future. Other important sectors of the economy are agriculture, recreation and tourism, and transportation.

OVERLAND M.F.P.

GENERAL LOCATION MAP



OVERLAND M.F.P.
LAND STATUS



MAJOR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Major issues and problems deserving special attention during the planning process are summarized below. These issues are usually the result of conflicts between land or resource uses, irreversible impacts of development on the environment and socio-economic effects of land use actions on local communities. Those issues addressed include coal leasing, intensive livestock grazing, wildlife habitat management, land tenure, wild horse management, oil and gas leasing, Adobe Town natural values, Overland Trail and off-road vehicle use.

Coal Leasing

There is expressed interest in developing coal on some 175,000 acres of land lying from a few miles west of Rawlins and stretching south to the Colorado border. Total coal reserves in areas under current demand probably exceed 600 million tons of low sulphur, high BTU coal. Leasing these areas nominated by industry would add significantly to the nation's domestic energy supply. Thousands of local jobs would be created by coal mining projects. Population influx would be dramatic. There would be enormous local revenues in terms of taxes, royalties and the gross national product.

Many of these coal potential lands coincide with premium wildlife habitat areas for deer, elk, antelope, and sage grouse. Many of the proposed coal lease areas from Atlantic Rim south to the Colorado border are crucial winter ranges for elk, deer and antelope. Loss of these areas where forage is available due to low snowfall and windswept conditions would affect game populations on a regional basis. Elk and deer in these winter ranges can not tolerate the degree of human disturbance anticipated due to mining. Long term loss of habitat would occur from mining in areas of select vegetative cover such as aspen groves and bitter brush types. Reclamation of these areas with current rehabilitation methods would at best be questionable.

Resolution of conflicts between coal development, management of crucial wildlife habitat and protection of unique aesthetic values can only be accomplished by some degree of restriction on mining or reduction in wildlife populations and aesthetic values.

Intensive Livestock Grazing

Grazing on BLM lands is regulated by setting specific calendar periods for grazing and by specifying livestock numbers by allotment. Under such management the range condition has generally improved from a slight to moderate degree over the past 40 years. There is an opportunity to intensify grazing management on 50 allotments by implementing intensive grazing systems. This is for the purpose of accelerating improvement of range conditions and the production of additional forage. Grazing systems normally require considerable fencing and water development so that the forage can be utilized in a systematic manner. This relates to the physiological needs of the plants being grazed. Improved range condition will normally benefit livestock, wild horses, watershed, wildlife, and visual resources. The range improvement facilities required, such as fences and water developments, cause impacts on other resources. Water distribution can influence the seasonal distribution of wildlife and wild horses and may result in more competition for forage. Fences may conflict with migration routes for wildlife and wild horses and can adversely affect open space and primitive values. Many ranchers do not feel that such intensive grazing systems, involving three to five separate pastures, can be economically adapted to their particular operation.

Under multiple use concepts, the intensity of the chosen grazing systems must be weighed against the need for accelerated improvement of the range and the effects of fences and additional water developments or other resource values. Another priority is the ranchers' operational requirements as they relate to intensive grazing systems.

Wildlife Habitat

The Overland Planning Unit has historically supported diversified and abundant wildlife populations. The most noted game species are antelope, elk, deer, and sage grouse. The high quality wildlife habitat is due to the ideal arrangement of shelter, food, cover, and water and the fact that crucial ranges

have remained relatively undisturbed by man's activities. Elk, deer, and antelope ranges in the Overland Planning Unit are of local, regional and national importance. They have economic importance as a renewable resource and have great aesthetic and recreational values. Wildlife in fact is a central position to the western way of life. Of the three big game species (elk, antelope, and deer), elk are the most susceptible to human disturbance, resulting from such major activities as coal mining, and oil and gas drilling. Mule deer are second since present technology makes it very difficult to restore their habitat if major surface disturbance has occurred. Antelope are the most adaptable of the big game species. They are able to tolerate most mining activity. Most of the surface-disturbing activities occurring in the Overland Planning Unit have the potential to affect wildlife habitat. Good range management that results in improvement of the range for livestock can also benefit wildlife. Poorly placed or designed fences can hinder wildlife migration or wrong locations for water developments can degrade crucial wildlife wintering areas. Coal, oil and gas development can adversely affect wildlife if implemented in crucial wildlife habitat areas or if allowed during critical seasons. Human population densities resulting from energy development will have a permanent impact on wildlife habitat.

Much of the potential damage to wildlife from other program activities can be mitigated by use of restrictions or good management practices. However, accelerated programs, especially as now occurring for coal, oil and gas, will reduce the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat.

Land Tenure

With pending energy development activity, it is expected that most of the towns in the planning unit will double in population. Communities affected include Rawlins, Saratoga, Baggs, Wamsutter, Sinclair, and Savery. The NRL surrounds most of these communities as over 50% of lands in the planning unit are NRL.

Approximately 1,900 acres of public lands have been identified as valuable for community expansion over the next 20 years, mostly around Rawlins. The lands identified for disposal are currently used for antelope habitat and livestock grazing. Disposal of these lands would result in only minor conflicts while non-disposal would increase impacts on other resources by encouraging greater community sprawl or new towns.

Wild Horse Management

The Overland Planning Unit supports a population of approximately 1,700 wild horses. Some 600 of these wild horses are located in the checkerboard land pattern south of Interstate 80. The remainder is south of the checkerboard with the highest concentrations located in the Adobe Town area in the southwest corner of the unit. Wild horse herds are increasing by approximately 20% per year. The Wild Horse and Burro Act provides for managing horses in refuges, ranges, or as part of a multiple use complex with numbers to be decided based on consideration of other resource uses and carrying capacity of the range. Maintenance of wild horse populations in the checkerboard land pattern (45% of the planning unit) will require approval of the private landowners. Because of the problems involved in controlling populations and migrations, this approval is not expected. An alternative would be to establish a wild horse range in the Adobe Town area at the expense of other resource uses such as wildlife and livestock grazing. The public is not in favor of this proposal.

With an expanding population, wild horses are competing directly with domestic livestock and wildlife for available forage and water. At the present time virtually no allocations for forage have been made on grazing allotments for wild horses. Extensive non-use taken by livestock operators has thus far prevented major overgrazing and severe competition between the various classes of livestock and wildlife. Methods of population control have to date been expensive and inadequate. Significant competition between wildlife, livestock and wild horses is foreseen in the near future even if control measures could be initiated immediately. Indications are that the Wyoming public does not appear to benefit, based on a recreation viewpoint, from wild horse herd management. Some cannot distinguish between wild and domestic horses. Many are familiar with the horses' recent domestic background. The wild horse is appreciated more on a national level.

Oil and Gas Leasing

Approximately 90% of the federal land in the Overland Planning Unit is presently under oil and gas lease. The main areas of intense oil and gas exploration drilling are confined to the areas near Hay Reservoir, Barrel Spring,

Wamsutter, Flat Top and Deep Gulch. In 1975, 173 wells in 25 fields produced 499,935 barrels of oil and 41,848,696 million cubic feet of gas from all lands in the Overland Planning Unit. Exploration is intensifying. Drilling activity has more than doubled in the past year and will continue at an accelerated rate.

Oil and gas drilling and production impact watershed values, cultural values and aesthetics to a minor degree. Of greater consequence are effects on wildlife populations and their habitat. Drilling is a temporary situation, while production results in permanent roads, traffic, pipelines, etc. Such disturbance is more significant in crucial wintering areas for elk and deer or in raptor or sage grouse nesting areas.

Impacts on wildlife habitats, watersheds, historical and cultural values and other such resources can be generally mitigated through control of drilling periods, location and access. For instance, drilling can be restricted from elk wintering ranges during periods of use.

Adobe Town Natural Area Proposal

Adobe Town is located approximately 65 miles southwest of Rawlins in the extreme southwest corner of the planning unit. The general area is characterized by "bad lands" formations formed by wind and water over geologic time. It is relatively free of man's intrusion and has wild and scenic character. The area is very rich in archeological values and supports a variety of wildlife species. It also has one of the highest wild horse concentrations in Wyoming.

The area is leased for oil and gas exploration and production. Some drilling is now occurring. Restricting commercial activities is not legal at this time. The majority of public opinion obtained at MFP workshops does not favor totally excluding other uses to preserve unique value.

Overland Trail

The Overland Trail crosses the planning unit with approximately 30 miles (45%) of the trail on public lands. The trail crosses the high plain, sagebrush-grassland country generally paralleling I-80 some 12 miles to the south. This major stage line, freight route, and mail line of the 1860's was a significant factor in settling the West. Only ten short segments of the trail have been identified as being in good condition with readily distinguishable ruts. The Sage Creek, Washakie, and Duck Lake stations are located on public land and have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The Bridger Pass site is presently on the Register.

Protection and preservation of these trail segments as part of our national heritage would not significantly affect other land uses or resource programs. However, protection of the total trail could result in many limitations being placed on other activities across the entire planning unit.

Off-Road Vehicle Use

Currently off-road vehicle (ORV) use on the public land is widespread and unrestricted. The number and type of ORV's owned by the public are increasing at a rapid rate. Four-wheel drive and motorcycle operators are increasing the road networks into undisturbed areas at an accelerated rate. Certain limitation of ORV use is being considered in order to minimize disturbance to wildlife on seasonal ranges, to prevent watershed damage, and to protect cultural, natural and aesthetic values. Initial areas under consideration are Adobe Town and part of the better blocked land southwest of Rawlins.

Management Decisions

Resource Description

Gross area of the Planning Unit is 3,242,130 acres. Of this, nearly 58% or 1,894,644 acres are NRL, 38% or 1,246,341 acres is private property, and the remaining 4% or 101,055 acres is state-owned land. Land ownership patterns range from widely scattered tracts of NRL along the forest fringe and Little Snake River area to well blocked NRL areas. A checkerboard land pattern exists for 20 miles on each side of the Union Pacific Railroad.

With the high percentage of NRL and its often strategic location, there are demands for disposal to meet the needs of other governmental agencies, private individuals and industrial or utility companies.

Projected growth in population, primarily from energy development, indicates a need for NRL to provide growing room for communities. Additional area will also be needed for facilities such as airports, parks, water facilities and rights-of-way for pipelines, power lines and roads.

Industrial development will result in areas being mined as well as sites for offices, processing plants, loading facilities, etc.

The proposed Savery-Pothook project will need NRL for the dam site, irrigation ditches, agricultural lands and office buildings.

Decisions

Multiple Use Objective

To make NRL available to meet the needs of the public for urban expansion, industrial development, public purposes and agricultural expansion while considering other resource values.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Dispose of 1900 + acres for urban expansion.**

Rationale: Disposal of these areas for community expansion would promote orderly development of existing communities and discourage a "new town" policy. Only minor impacts on other resources would result.

2. **Convey or lease lands needed for intensive facilities such as uranium processing plants, coal gasification plants, loading facilities or power plants.**
Rationale: Facilities are necessary for development of the mineral resources.

3. a. **Retain 320 acres immediately northeast of existing airport in Sec. 2, T. 21 N., R. 87 W. for public purposes disposal for Rawlins airport expansion.**
Rationale: Lands provided to local governments would allow development and upgrading of facilities at a decreased cost to the taxpayer. Only minor conflicts with wildlife could arise.

b. **Retain and manage 560 acres adjacent to Fort Steele in Sec. 22, T. 21 N., R. 85 W. for purposes consistent with the historical theme of Fort Steele.**
Rationale: The tract will be managed for multiple uses but first priority will be given to supporting the historical theme of the adjacent Fort. These lands will be retained in federal ownership, but subject to transfer to the local government if a need for more intensive historic development should occur.

c. **Retain 200 acres in Sec. 4, T. 21 N., R. 87 W. for recreation and public purposes to meet demands as Rawlins grows northward.**
Rationale: As the city grows, demands for a park may materialize. Only minor conflicts exist with other resources.

d. **BLM will retain and manage in its natural state the unique conifer site immediately adjacent to Highway 287 approximately 9 miles north of Rawlins.**
Rationale: This site has been recommended for a roadside county park. The District multiple use advisory board advised that such development might damage this unique stand of ponderosa pine located on high desert plains and recommended preservation for aesthetic values.

e. **Retain and provide 200 acres in Sec. 20, T. 21 N., R. 87 W. for city facilities used as a water filtration plant.**
Rationale: This tract of land located south of town may be needed for city facilities.

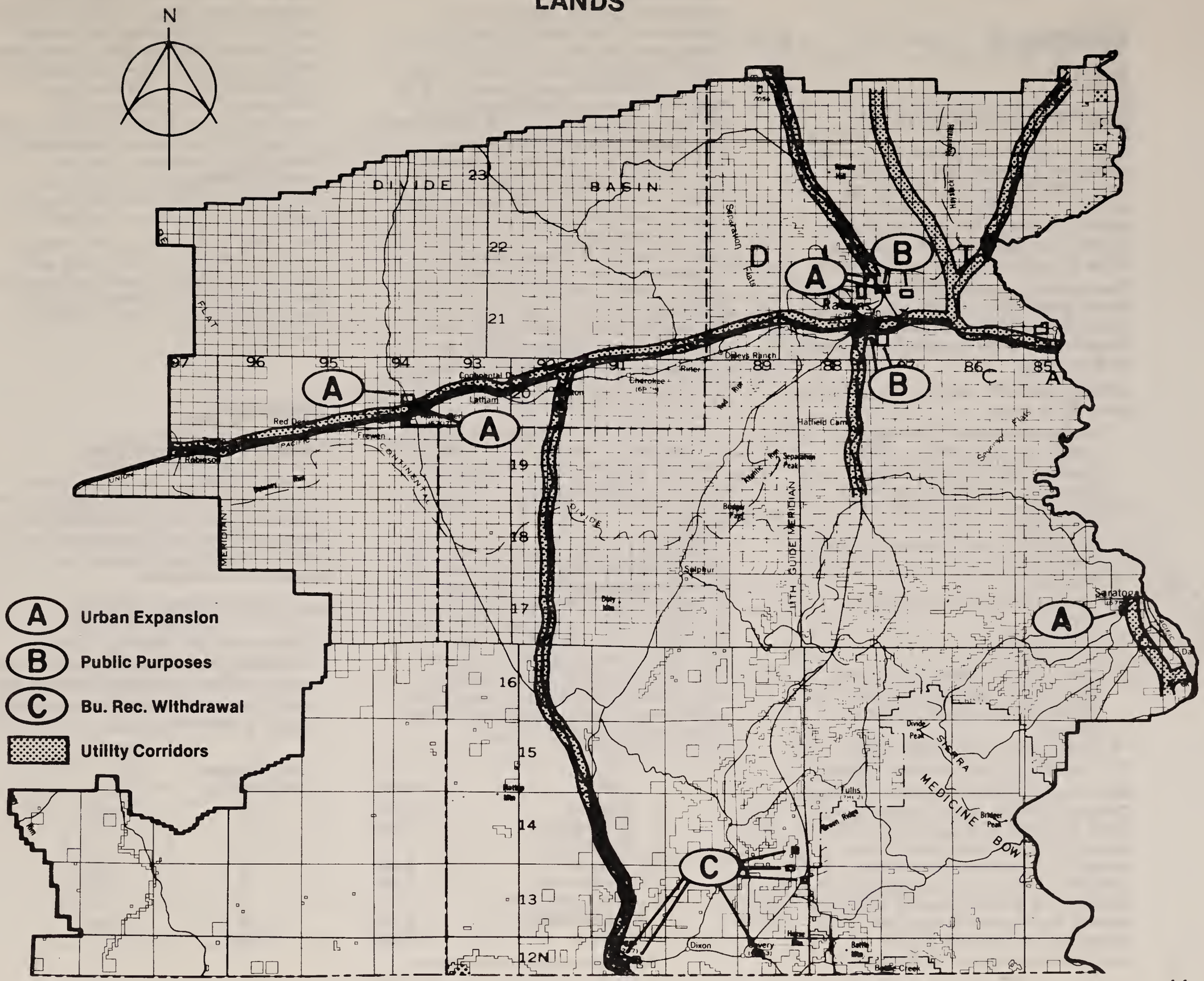
f. **Retain and provide Section 28, T. 21 N., R. 87 W. for the future Wyoming State Penitentiary.**
Rationale: This tract was identified as the best available site by Wyoming State and BLM officials.

4. **Allow withdrawal of 700 acres for the Savery-Pothook project for dam and reservoir, maintenance headquarters and agricultural purposes.**
Rationale: These are small isolated tracts used for livestock and wildlife grazing. The economics of agricultural development overshadows economic benefits of grazing.

5. **Concentrate utilities into identified corridors whenever feasible.**
Rationale: Numerous utility rights-of-way presently exist in the corridors. Continued use, with proper stipulations to grants, will have minor impacts.

Variances from Carbon County Zoning Ordinances will be coordinated with the county. Conflicts with wildlife on crucial ranges and visual intrusions are to be considered in the stipulations.

OVERLAND M.F.P.
LANDS



Management Decisions

MINERALS

Coal

Resource Description

Coal is present throughout the greater part of the Overland Planning Unit in many different geologic formations. Most of the known coal is soft and called bituminous, sub-bituminous or lignite. This depends on its chemical make up, with lignite being the softest.

Coal mining by underground methods began in the area in 1863 near Sulphur. The Nebraska mine just south of Rawlins reportedly operated from about 1900 to 1945.

Coal deposits are found in the following geographic areas:

1. North of I-80 within the checkerboard and west from the Platte River to the district boundary (excluding the Red Desert area).
2. Red Desert — adjacent to Wamsutter.
3. Cherokee — under lease to Pacific Power & Light.
4. Red Rim.
5. North Knobs and Continental Divide.
6. China Butte.
7. Atlantic Rim.
8. Cow Creek Complex — includes Cow Creek, Stagecoach, Cow Creek Buttes, Muddy, Sand Hills and Cedars.
9. Savery Preference Right Area.
10. Kindt Basin (southeast of Rawlins).

With the exception of the Cow Creek Complex and the Savery Preference Right Area, the land pattern in the above areas is checkerboard. The U.S. usually owns the even-numbered sections while the odd-numbered sections are privately owned. The mineral rights under these odd-numbered sections are almost exclusively controlled by the Union Pacific Corporation, its subsidiaries or business associates.

Exploration drilling, sampling and evaluation of coal has occurred, but not to the same degree of detail in all areas. Therefore, not as much is known about the coal resource in areas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 10 as in the other areas. From the information on hand, it is known that much of the coal is of relatively high quality, i.e., ash content ranges from 5.8% to 19.5%, BTU's per pound varies from 5,084 to 12,000 and sulphur content averages from 0.25% to 2.1%. The coal is usually found in multiple beds of varying thickness. Beds range in thickness from 14 inches to 30 feet. Many of these beds are tilted from the horizontal. This tilt or dip ranges from a few degrees to as much as 75°. The greater the dip indicates that surface mining may be more difficult. Some of the coal north of I-80 is believed to be "contaminated" with uranium.

A total of 135,123 acres was nominated for coal leasing by industry in 1976. In the same process, it was recommended by other interest groups that 32,370 acres in the same area not be leased for coal.

The amount of total coal reserves in the areas identified above is not known due to the incompleteness of the inventory and exploration. *The only information on reserves comes from specific mine proposals.* This data shows a total of 475 million tons of coal known at this time. The Cherokee Tract is presently under lease to Pacific Power and Light and contains reserves estimated at 250 million tons (included in total).

	Tract	Acres	Est. Reserves Million Tons	Map Ref.
1.	**Red Rim**	17,917	60	A-RR
2.	**China Butte**	6,080	103	A-CB
3.	**Continental Divide**	3,480	10	A-CD
4.	**North Knobs**	2,240	6	A-K
5.	**North portion of Atlantic Rim**	2,521[1]	23	A-AL
	Total	32,238	202	

[1]Includes 640 acres of surface estate only.

The Savery Preference Right Tract is an area of 31,000 acres of largely public minerals under private surface for which reserves are estimated at 160 million tons or more. The U.S. has a contractual obligation (present legal interpretation) to issue a lease for this area upon perfection of an application and acceptance of terms of the lease by the company. This obligation exists due to the legal requirements of the law (Mineral Leasing Act of 1920) under which the applicant was authorized to prospect for the coal in 1966-1967.

No mining is occurring at the present time in the Planning Unit. There are indications, however, that industry may start construction of mines on their private lands with or without federal coal leases.

Decisions

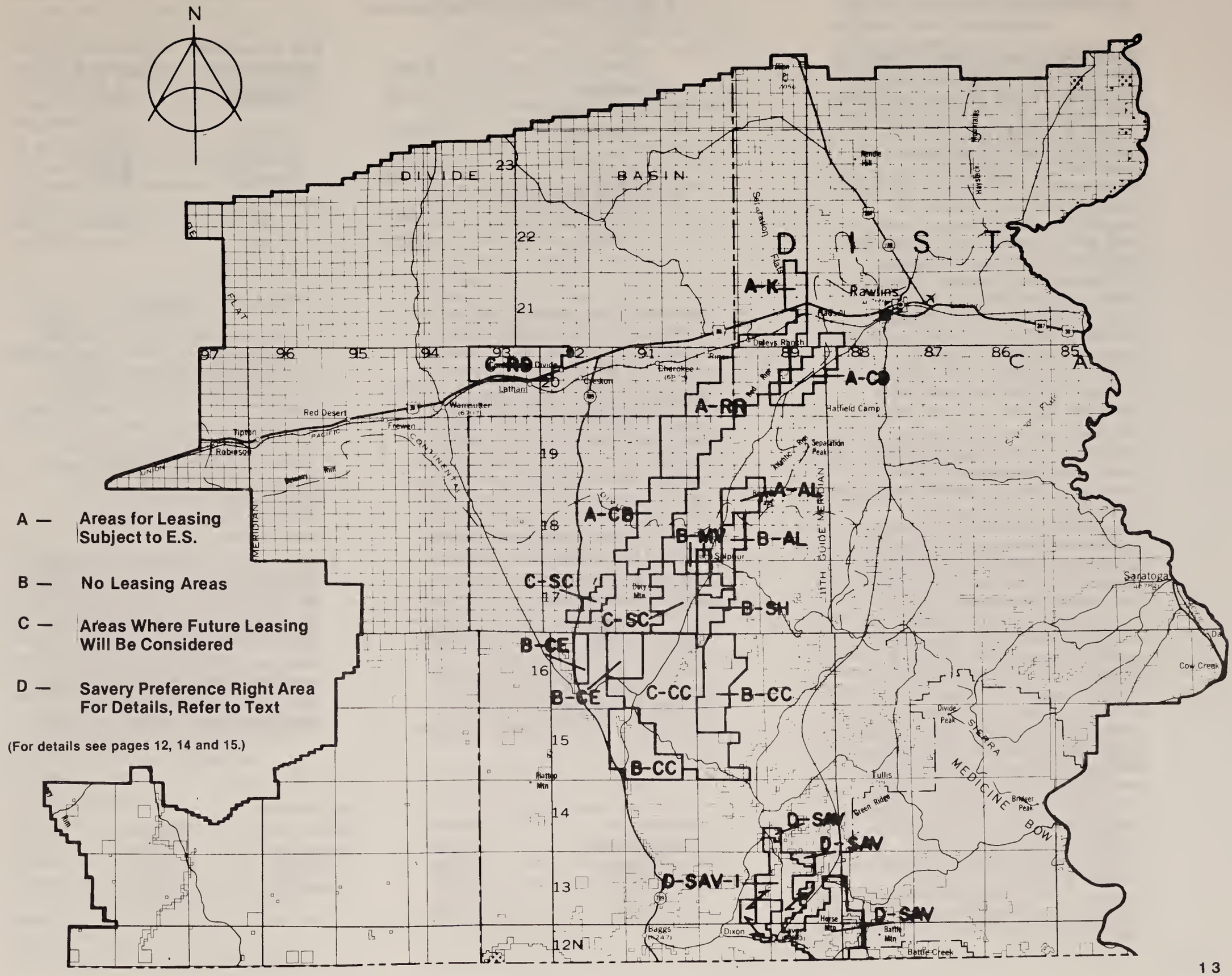
Multiple Use Objective

To allow leasing of coal to assist the nation in meeting its energy needs; becoming more energy self-sufficient by 1985, and providing adequate environmental safeguards with strict rehabilitation standards.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. Subject to the findings of the regional coal environmental statement, offer the following areas for coal leasing: Specify underground mining where feasible.

COAL



A — Areas for Leasing Subject to E.S.

B — No Leasing Areas

C — Areas Where Future Leasing Will Be Considered

D — Savery Preference Right Area For Details, Refer to Text

(For details see pages 12, 14 and 15.)

2. Do not lease the following coal areas:

	Tract	Acres	Est. Reserves Million Tons	Map Ref.
1.	Muddy	1,700	Unknown	B-MV
2.	Cow Creek Buttes	31,360	Unknown	B-CC
3.	Sand Hills	5,120	Unknown	B-SH
4.	Cedars	7,680	Unknown	B-CE
5.	South portion of Atlantic Rim	3,806	23	B-AL
	Total	49,666	23 +	

Rationale: Energy self-sufficiency can eventually be a reality if a positive response is made to opportunities for coal leasing. A shift from petroleum to coal is needed for electrical generation, so that our petroleum reserves can be used for transportation. The coal in the above areas will assist the nation in becoming self-sufficient in energy and, at the same time, contribute to better air quality due to the low sulphur and ash content. Energy needs must be planned well in advance. Leasing now will add needed energy to the nation's supply in about five years. Leasing of federal coal would mean added jobs for the local area and additional revenues to the county and state.

The areas identified for leasing, subject to the findings of the regional coal environmental statement, are all within the checkerboard limit. The private minerals on alternate sections are controlled by Rocky Mountain Energy Company. It is highly probable that the private coal would be mined, even without the intermingled federal leases. Mining plans have been submitted for each and markets apparently exist for this coal. To mine the private coal and leave the intermingled federal coal can be a waste of energy resources. Based on present mining plans, approximately 1,400 acres would be disturbed as well as reclaimed annually when mines are in full operation. With improving technology and careful reclamation, surface production capacity should be restored. Although some crucial antelope habitat is located in the area, antelope are more mobile and also more tolerant of coal mining activity than deer and elk.

Rationale: The Muddy Creek and the Cedars areas contain substantial crucial deer habitat. Parts of these two areas are within a county-designated scenic corridor. The Sand Hills area is classified as crucial winter habitat for deer and elk. This area possesses very unstable soils. The Cow Creek Butte area contains crucial winter elk habitat. The south part of Atlantic Rim has unstable soils, high scenic values, contains crucial elk habitat and possesses historic and recreational values.

Mining these tracts would result in significant conflicts. Use of the surface as crucial wildlife habitat for deer and elk would in all probability result in wildlife population reductions. Elk and deer are much less tolerant of this activity than antelope. There are also lesser amounts of crucial habitat available to them. The unstable soils in the two areas would make successful rehabilitation extremely questionable. Mining within the scenic corridor would be inconsistent with the purposes for which the corridor was established. Mining the south part of Atlantic Rim, in addition to the impacts on wildlife habitat, would adversely affect the use and appreciation of the area for its scenic, historic and other recreational values.

3. Consider leasing the following areas, subject to: the acquisition of more specific information on the amount and distribution of the coal resource, a showing of demand, the development of specific mining proposals, and the further identification of crucial wildlife habitat locations.

	Tract	Acres	Est. Reserves Million Tons	Map Ref.
1.	Stagecoach	10,240	Unknown	C-SC
2.	Cow Creek	37,760	Unknown	C-CC
3.	Red Desert	7,040	Unknown	C-RD
	Total	55,040		

Rationale:: Overriding conflicts between mining and other resource values and uses are not now apparent in this area, but there is not enough information available to justify leasing. The amount and distribution of coal is not known. No mining plans have been filed and no apparent demand exists.

A decision to lease or not lease will be made when more specific information is available. This would allow an assessment of prospective specific resource conflicts in the subject areas.

4. Savery Preference Right Lease Area

Acre	Est. Reserves
31,000	160 million tons

Map Reference
D-SAV and D-SAV-1

Based on the present interpretation of the Department's contractual obligations when the prospecting permits were issued, no option exists but to lease this coal on perfection of an application and acceptance by the applicant of the lease terms. If options do exist, leasing would be restricted to the west part of the tract or map reference D-SAV-1. This would leave 2,600 acres for leasing.

Rationale: A large part of the crucial deer and elk habitat for the Sierra Madre area is included in the Savery Preference Right lease application area. In the nomination process, it was recommended that this area not be leased. Scenic values are high. The prospective mining operations are believed to be underground and therefore conflicts with livestock operations may be relatively minor. Surface owners are divided in terms of support or lack of support for the proposed project. The mines would provide large income and employment for the area. The changes would probably permanently alter the way of life in the Little Snake River Valley.

If leasing options do exist, leasing would be restricted to at least the western part of the tract due to crucial deer and elk habitat in the area. Before mining plans are approved, questions should be answered relative to 1) slope instability, 2) presence, amount and ability to control selenium, 3) perched water tables, 4) socio-economic impacts, and 5) geologic faults, and danger from earthquakes.

5. The balance of the known coal areas is not considered for leasing at this time. This is due to lack of specific information on the coal, the fact some of it is high in sulphur, some may be contaminated by uranium and that no demand for the coal exists at this time. The issuance of exploration permits in these areas will be considered subject to technical exams for disturbance to other resource values and environmental assessment. Provisions should be included to limit drilling activity on crucial habitats to the same dates as the oil and gas drilling.

Rationale: Not enough information is available on the character, distribution and amount of coal resources in these areas to permit identification of prospective resource conflicts. Due to the continuing need for energy resources and the necessity to weigh mining in one area against another, it is in the public interest to permit regulated exploration drilling.

6. Consult with involved private surface owners in the location of rights-of-way and development of rehabilitation measures.

Rationale: Private surface owners usually have first-hand knowledge of the areas. They also have needs, ideas and property rights that should be considered in rights-of-way location and where the reclamation measures will be applied to private and public lands alike.

OIL AND GAS

Resource Description

Oil and gas exploration and production occurs throughout the planning unit with the concentration of activity located southwest of Rawlins. The only sizeable area in the unit not being actively explored is the southeast corner which is not believed to possess favorable geologic structure. Ninety percent of the NRL in the unit has been leased for oil and gas.

Exploration is continuing at a rapid pace. In fiscal year 1976 there were twenty separate exploration operations in the unit, resulting in the exploration of 500 miles of line. Drilling intensity has increased markedly since the beginning of the energy crisis. In fiscal year 1976 there were 42 wells drilled in the unit. Nineteen became producers.

The following table shows the production in the planning unit for 1974 and 1975 for all lands private, state and NRL.

Year	No. of Fields	No. of Wells	Barrels of Oil	MCF[1] Gas
1974	23	158	1,028,816	38,941,787
1975	25	173	499,935	41,848,696

CUMULATIVE PRODUCTION

Oil (Barrels)	Gas (MCF)[1]
22,330,477	508,792,083

[1]Thousands of cubic feet.

Decisions

Multiple Use Objective

To make lands available for oil and gas exploration and development; to assist the nation in becoming more energy self-sufficient by 1985; minimizing impacts on other resources; protecting other resources with overriding values; and requiring adequate rehabilitation.

Multiple Use Decisions

Allow oil and gas exploration and development throughout the unit with the following exceptions and restrictions:

1. **No surface occupancy or disturbance on specified historic and recreation sites.**
2. **No surface occupancy or disturbance on the actual Overland Trail ruts and selected associated historic sites. A strip one-half mile wide on each side of well-preserved portions of the trail center or the visible horizon, whichever is closer, would be reserved from occupancy.**
3. **Exploration drilling will be allowed from April 15 to December 15 on specified crucial big game winter ranges; from June 30 to March 15 in specified sage grouse strutting and nesting areas; and from June 30 to May 1 in specified raptor nesting areas except as otherwise permitted by the authorized officer.**

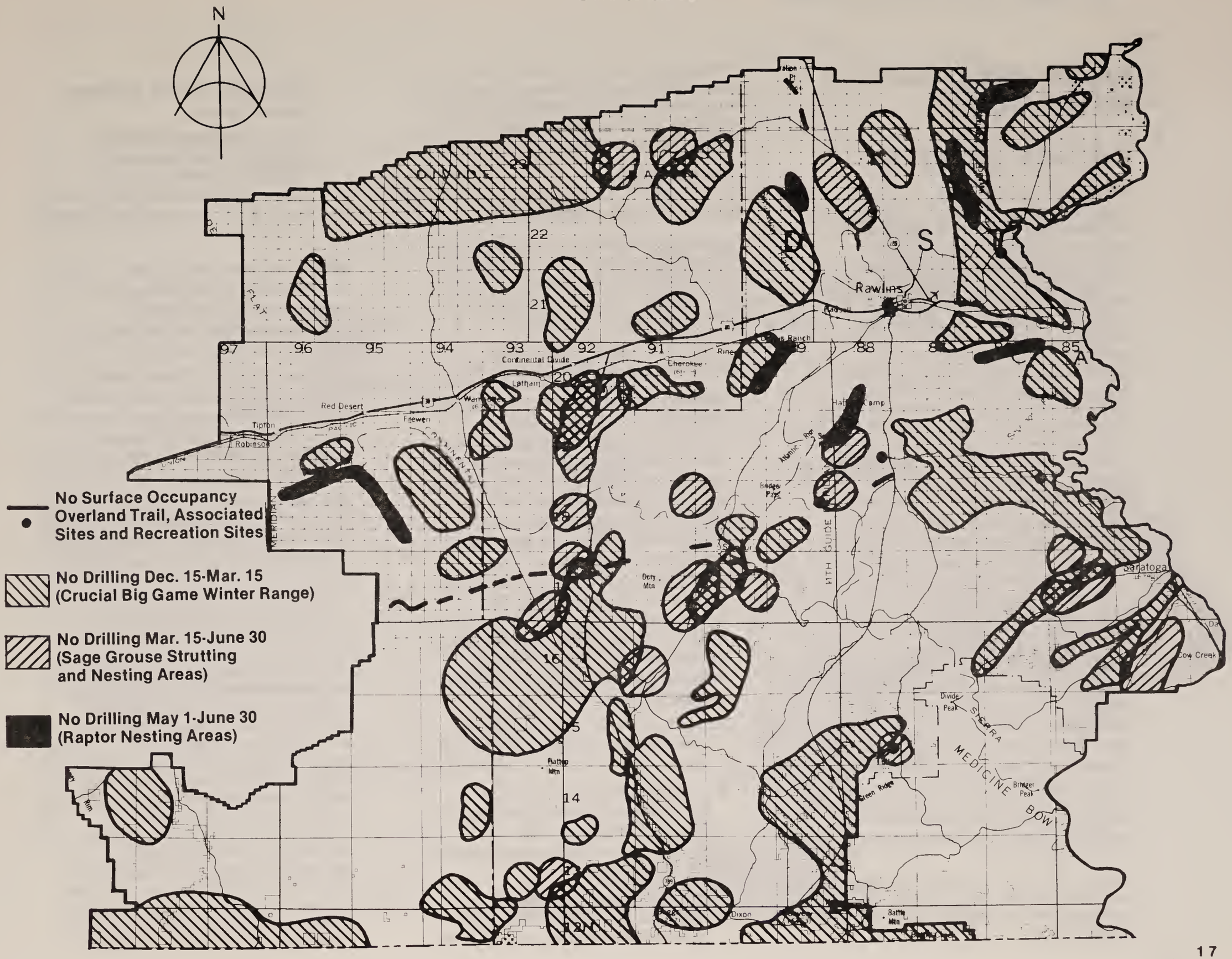
Rationale: Oil and gas exploration and development have been conducted in the Overland Planning Unit for approximately 40 years. It has been a mainstay of the local economy for many years, providing income and employment to Carbon and Sweetwater County residents and needed energy supplies for local and regional consumption. In order to meet local, state and national demand and to meet the national commitment of greater self-sufficiency by 1985, new sources of petroleum must be discovered. Present knowledge of the geology in the planning unit indicates that there is a good possibility of finding new petroleum reservoirs that will help meet the present and future demands of the country. Exploration is intensifying. Drilling activity has more than doubled in the past year. An exploration program of approximately the present intensity is expected to continue for some years to come.

Drilling activity, depending on its proximity to a historic or recreation site, can result in surface disturbance noise and activity that is inconsistent with the use of these areas for educational, interpretation and recreational purposes. It is likely that by moving a proposed well site a few hundred feet, the above impacts could be eliminated for the most part while the oil reservoir may be tapped by slant drilling.

The Overland Trail and associated structures are nationally significant historic resources. Only small portions within the unit are well preserved (less than 15 miles). Two stage stations have potential for interpretation — one on the Overland Trail and the other on the Rawlins-Ft. Washakie Trail. These stations, with selected trail sections, have potential for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The Bridger Pass site is presently on the Register. Drilling and production close to the trail are not consistent with the historic or early pioneer theme and, in some cases, can result in destruction of the resource. These restrictions will protect only significant sites and trail sections from surface disturbance and destruction, but will not preclude off-site slant drilling.

Drilling activity, the associated noise, people and vehicle movements can have adverse survival and reproduction impacts on wildlife in their crucial habitats at the most critical time of year. Effects can include habitat (winter range, nests, strutting grounds) being abandoned, unsuccessful reproduction and in some cases, reductions in population levels. The restriction on time of drilling in selected crucial and nesting areas will minimize the chances of serious disturbance while still providing for exploration to occur during most of the year.

OVERLAND M.F.P.
OIL & GAS



Management Decisions

RANGE AND LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Resource Description

Ninety-one ranch operators currently make use of five Section 15 leases and 154 Section 3 allotments. Both cattle and sheep currently use various allotments at various times of the year. A total of 252,021 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) are presently licensed in the unit. Grazing use on BLM lands is regulated by setting specific grazing dates and livestock numbers by allotment. Under present management, the range condition has improved generally at a slight to moderate degree over the past 20 to 40 years. Within the Overland Planning Unit there are currently seven allotments which are being managed intensively under Allotment Management Plans (AMPs).

The present situation with livestock management is complicated by the following problems. Heavy use is occurring around water sources and in meadows. There is also a lack of reliable water sources. Very low forage allocations have been made for wild horses and wildlife. Fences for livestock management interfere with movement of wild horses and wildlife. The checkerboard land pattern also results in management problems.

Approximately 90% of the area is covered with shrub type vegetation, 72% is sagebrush with the accompanying grass, 10% greasewood and 8% saltbush. No threatened or endangered plant species are known to exist within the unit.

Public opinion was overwhelmingly against Intensive (rest rotation) grazing management and major fence construction.

In the past, sagebrush spraying or plowing and seeding projects have been completed on various allotments. These practices have increased grass production an average of 3 to 4 times.

Decisions

Multiple Use Objectives

To manage livestock in a manner that will not only increase available forage for livestock, but will also provide for improvement in wildlife habitat, watershed conditions and other related resources.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Initiate AMPs on those allotments identified in Area 1. When possible several allotments under the control of one range operator will be combined into one grazing system. Consideration will be given to combining the small allotments north and west of Saratoga into several larger allotments utilizing the existing allotments as pastures. On allotments with existing pasture fences, grazing systems will be developed using the present fencing pattern. Specific criteria are as follows:**
   a. **Work closely with operators, particularly in the checkerboard.**
   b. **Fencing will be kept to an absolute minimum, particularly north of Interstate 80. Unneeded existing fences will be removed.**
   c. **Water will be developed to improve utilization. Intensive water development will not be allowed in critical antelope winter range.**
   d. **Pursue deferred rotation grazing rather than rest rotation unless specific resource problems dictate the need for a rest rotation system.**

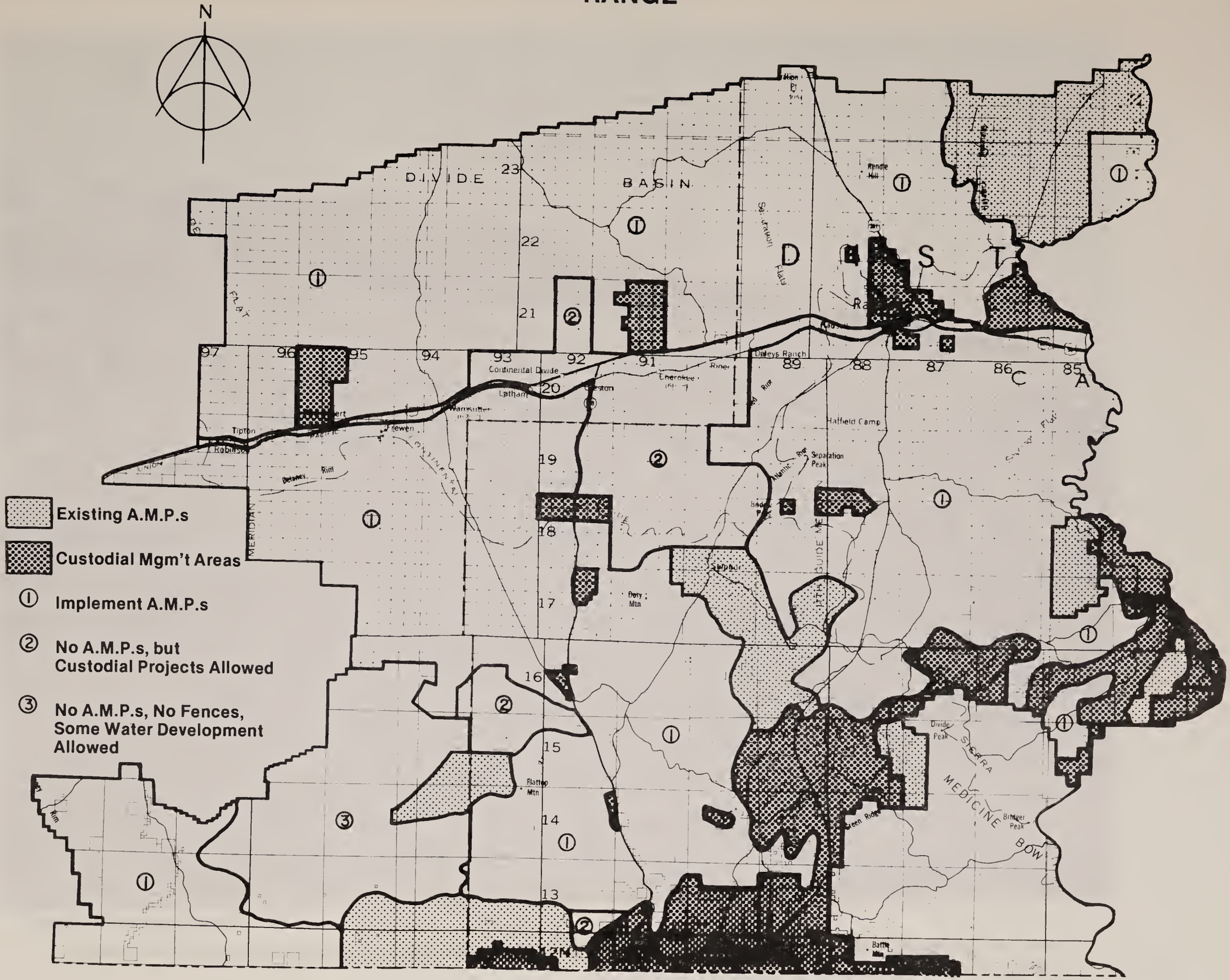
AMPs will not be initiated in Area 2. Custodial projects such as minor fencing and water development will be allowed to improve grazing utilization.

In Area 3 (Adobe Town) AMPs will not be initiated. No new fences will be constructed. Water may be developed if it does not have significant effects on natural or primitive values.

Rationale: Developing AMPs on the entire planning unit cannot be accomplished without major conflicts with other resource values. Present range condition and past trends do not support the concept of developing intensive grazing management over the entire unit.

This planning unit is composed primarily of a northern desert shrub vegetative association. The climatic factors are harsh with a very short growing season coupled with semi-arid conditions. Significant responses to intensive grazing systems will no doubt take many years. It is questionable if rest rotation grazing offers any advantages over deferred rotation systems, or deferred turnout, particularly considering Wyoming's very short growing season. Deferred grazing can also accommodate more effectively the flexibility that the livestock operators desire in this area.

OVERLAND M.F.P.
RANGE



Both cattle and sheep use the national resource lands in the Overland Unit at various times of the year. (Photo courtesy of the Wyoming Travel Commission)

The management tools required to implement a grazing system are the primary cause of impacts on other resources. Water development can influence the seasonal distribution of wildlife and wild horses. Fences may conflict with migration of wildlife as well as wild horses and can adversely affect open space and primitive values.

Area 2 is primarily encompassed by those areas that will be leased for coal mining. Development of management plans and installation of necessary management facilities would be counter-productive until mining is completed.

Installation of management plans in the Adobe Town area may adversely affect the natural or primitive values.

Public opinion was overwhelmingly against intensive grazing management (rest rotation) and major fence construction within the planning unit.

2. **Leave 75 allotments in a custodial management status. Encourage the Soil Conservation Service to develop management plans on those areas in conjunction with private land.**

   Rationale: While these allotments do not meet the criteria for intensive management, it is proper and desirable to maintain range condition, watershed values and wildlife habitat on these areas. Since extensive private land is involved, a grazing system with SCS involvement is appropriate.

3. **Decisions on sagebrush control will be made on a case by case basis after development and identification in an AMP. Normally no control will be approved in sage grouse nesting areas, crucial deer or antelope winter range or in Class A scenic areas.**

   Rationale: This approach will ensure that minimal impacts on other resources occur from sagebrush control programs.

Management Decisions

WILD FREE ROAMING HORSES

Resource Description

Two wild horse concentrations are located south of Interstate 80. One area includes Atlantic Rim, Doty Mountain — Flat Top while the other area is Adobe Town. In early 1976, 1,002 wild horses were counted west of 789 and 667 horses were counted east of Highway 789. These wild horses consume approximately 20,000 AUMs annually. Herd populations are increasing at approximately 20% per year.

Of this total, approximately 600 wild horses are located in the checkerboard land pattern south of Interstate 80. The remainder of these animals are located south of the checkerboard with the highest concentrations located in the Adobe Town area in the southwest corner of the unit.

Establishing wild horse herd management areas in the checkerboard (45% of the planning unit) will require co-operative agreements with, or at least approval of, the private land-owners, which is not feasible. Private landowners are not favorable to establishing horse management areas in the checkerboard, but rather are in the process of requesting complete removal.

Wild horses are competing directly with domestic livestock and wildlife for available forage and water. Competition will continue in the near future, even if control measures could be initiated immediately. At the present time virtually no forage allocations for wild horses have been made on grazing allotments. Extensive non-use taken by livestock operators has prevented major overgrazing and severe competition between the various classes of livestock and wildlife. Methods of population control have been expensive and inadequate. Indications are that the Wyoming public is not benefiting, based on a recreation viewpoint from wild horse herd management. Some cannot distinguish between wild and domestic horses and many are familiar with the horses' recent domestic background. The wild horse is appreciated more on a national level.

Decisions

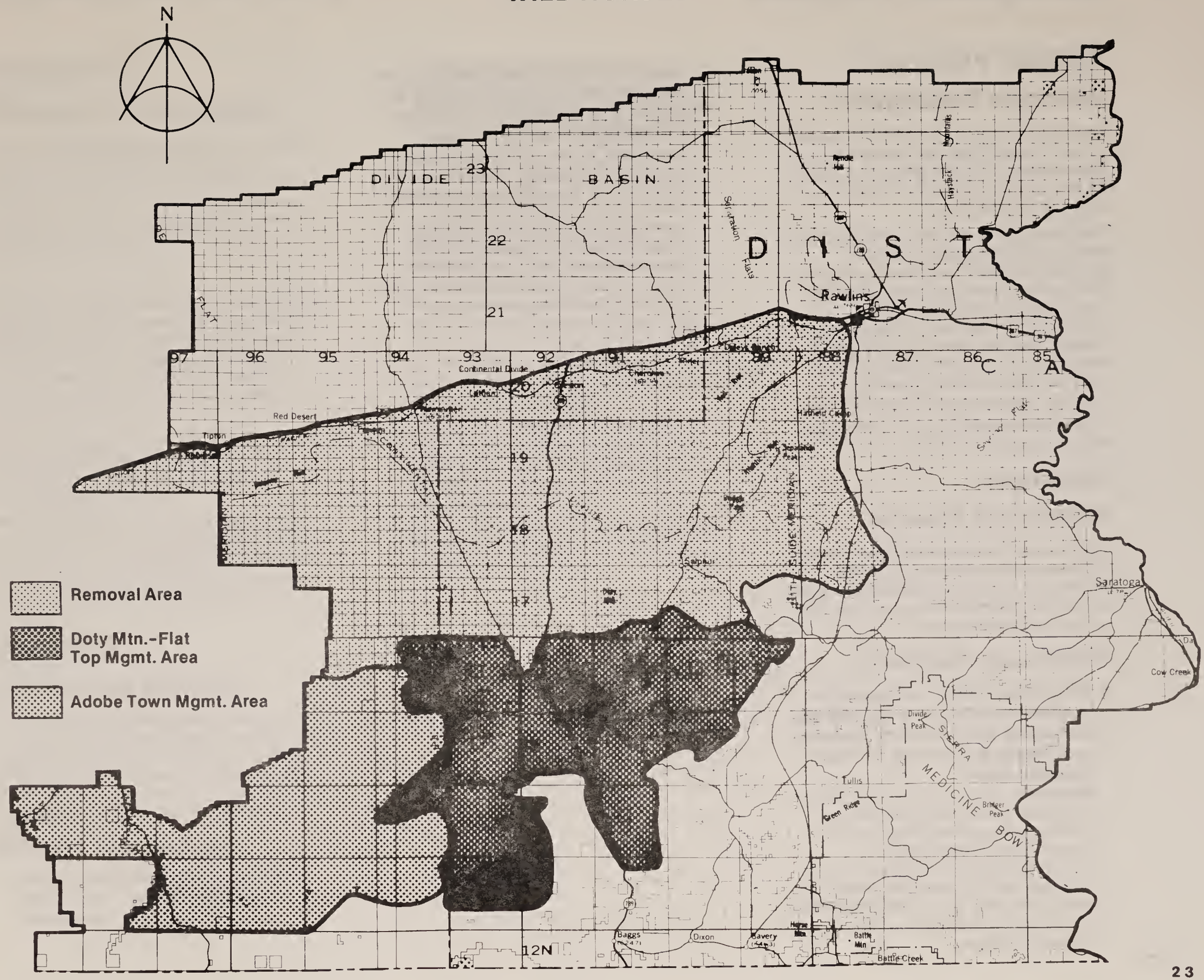
Multiple Use Objective

Manage wild horses as a component of multiple use management; with reductions in population levels consistent with other multiple use values, and in accordance with the management plan to be developed for wild horses.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Allocate 6,600 AUMs of forage and write a wild horse management plan for 400 head of horses in the Adobe Town area as an interim population level. Do not designate as a wild horse reserve.**
   Rationale: The Adobe Town area has relatively few man-made intrusions, and may possess potential for natural or primitive area designation. The potential of the area for oil and gas, uranium and oil shale development detracts from designation as a horse preserve. Low forage production potential, and the need for livestock and wildlife forage in the area were considered in the establishment of the population level. Managing the area as a horse reserve cannot be supported considering its remoteness, administrative problems, minimal visitor use, resource conflicts and public opinion.
2. **Allocate 3,600 AUMs to support a population of 200 horses in the Flat Top-Doty Mountain area as an interim population level.**
   Rationale: This area supports a large number of antelope and deer during the winter. The area is in an active oil and gas area. Several allotments in the area are managed under an AMP. Public opinion favored management of horses as one component of multiple use.
3. **Remove all wild horses from the checkerboard area.**
   Rationale: The checkerboard area is approximately 55% private owner-ship. Any horse management would require cooperative agreements with intermingled private landowners. Due to difficulty in controlling population levels and herd movements, private landowners do not favor these agreements.

OVERLAND M.F.P.
WILD HORSES



Management Decisions

FOREST PRODUCTS

Resource Description

The forest resource on NRL in the unit is very limited. The unit contains approximately 54,832 acres of juniper, 23,456 acres of broadleaf trees and 542 acres of conifer trees.

The broadleaf trees are primarily aspen and would be classified as non-productive forest land. Juniper stands are located north and west of Baggs and are also classified as non-productive forest land. The conifer types occur on higher elevations and are limited to the perimeter of the national forest. These types are classified as productive forest lands.

Volume estimates are 9,415,000 board feet for the conifer type.

Decisions

Multiple Use Objective

To develop the productive forest lands for forest management (considering watershed, forage and aesthetic values), and to maintain existing cover on non-productive forest lands.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Productive forest lands will be managed by thinning operations, salvaging dead and cull material and meeting the need for local demand sales.**
   Rationale: Due to the small amount of timber in the unit, only small timber cutting operations would occur. Using semi-selective harvesting techniques and irregular shaped cutting areas will result in minor impacts on wildlife, watershed, livestock, recreation or other resource values.

2. **Harvest minor forest products on non-productive forest lands to the extent that harvesting maintains or improves the forest cover.**
   Rationale: Aspen regenerates rapidly following harvesting. The form class of juniper is such that only scattered trees contain useable products. Harvesting will produce additional growing space for additional trees. The annual producing capacity of these stands is in excess of demands for minor forest products.

Management Decisions

WATERSHED

Resource Description

Present erosion condition in the area is rated at 96% stable, slight and moderate. Four percent of the unit is rated in critical or severe erosion condition. The vast majority of erosion now occurring is considered to be natural geologic erosion.

Water quality degradation sources are mainly non-point sources. Known water quality problem areas are Sage Creek Basin (suspended sediments), Sugar Creek (domestic waste) and Poison Basin (selenium). Other suspected problem areas include Shell Creek and Muddy Creek areas.

Flood damage occurs throughout the unit, generally periodically and is evidenced by washed out roads and stockwater reservoirs.

Activities such as mineral exploration and development, grazing, road and trail construction and pipeline or utility line construction can contribute to watershed problems if not conducted properly.

Decisions

Multiple Use Objective

To manage watershed as a resource for maintenance of soil productivity as well as water quantity and quality, and to consider and mitigate impacts to watershed values in authorizing and managing other resource activities.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Restrict surface disturbance on areas with mantle stability problems.**
   Rationale: Disturbance by man's activities in these areas adds to the instability. Total acreage of this type is extremely limited, but it should be protected due to potential for accelerating erosion, loss of productivity, aesthetics to the public and structure safety.
2. **Include watershed objectives in all activity management plan development and as stipulations on authorizations.**
   Rationale: Consideration of watershed values is needed in nearly all actions to provide for watershed maintenance and improvement. Maintenance of water structures and roads is also necessary.
3. **Complete inventories for soils, flood and sediment damage, water quality, water flows and condition of existing structures and projects.**
   Rationale: Additional specific data is needed to adequately manage the watershed resource.

Management Decisions

RECREATION

Resource Description

Recreational values of the unit are closely tied to the open space values, and the relatively natural condition of most of the area. The wildlife populations present the opportunity for hunting and sightseeing.

Rockhounding activity is very prevalent in certain areas. Petrified wood, various fossils, turritella agate and carnelian agate are the major rocks sought.

Historical values in the unit are centered on the Overland Trail. Daily stages traversed this trail from 1862 to 1867 and stage stations were built every twelve miles along the trail. Ten segments of the trail are still well preserved with visible ruts, while the remainder of the trail has been disturbed by modern uses or has weathered beyond easy recognition. Most of the stage stations are only remnants or completely obliterated. The Bridger Pass site is presently on the National Register of Historic Places. The trail crosses the checkerboard land pattern resulting in mixed Federal and private ownership. The majority (55%) is in private ownership.

Little remains of the Rawlins-Ft. Washakie Stage Route in the planning unit. Only one stretch of ruts (less than one mile) and the Separation Flats Station are considered good remnants.

In the southwest corner of the unit is an area known as Adobe Town. This area is characterized by interesting geologic formations, abrupt changes in topography (spires and sculptured ridges) and vegetative cover. It is a nesting area for the prairie falcon, various hawks and other birds of prey. This area also contains a high concentration of wild horses. An array of paleontological and archeological values are present. While man-made intrusions are relatively few at present, oil and gas leases have been issued for almost the entire area. The potential for increased activity in oil and gas, uranium and oil shale development exists. Wildlife and livestock also make use of the area.

Public access across the checkerboard land pattern, and to other areas, is very limited. This lack of established roads has led to an uncontrolled proliferation of trails and roads. Off-road vehicle use is a major problem in this unit. This uncontrolled use detracts from the visual values of the unit, and also creates adverse impacts on other resources, particularly in terms of watershed damage and erosion. This use is expanding at a rapid rate with the area's increasing human population.

Decisions

Multiple Use Objective

To provide protection and interpretation for those historic resources of significance for the education and enjoyment of the public while permitting other resource use and development not inconsistent or disruptive of the local historic setting.

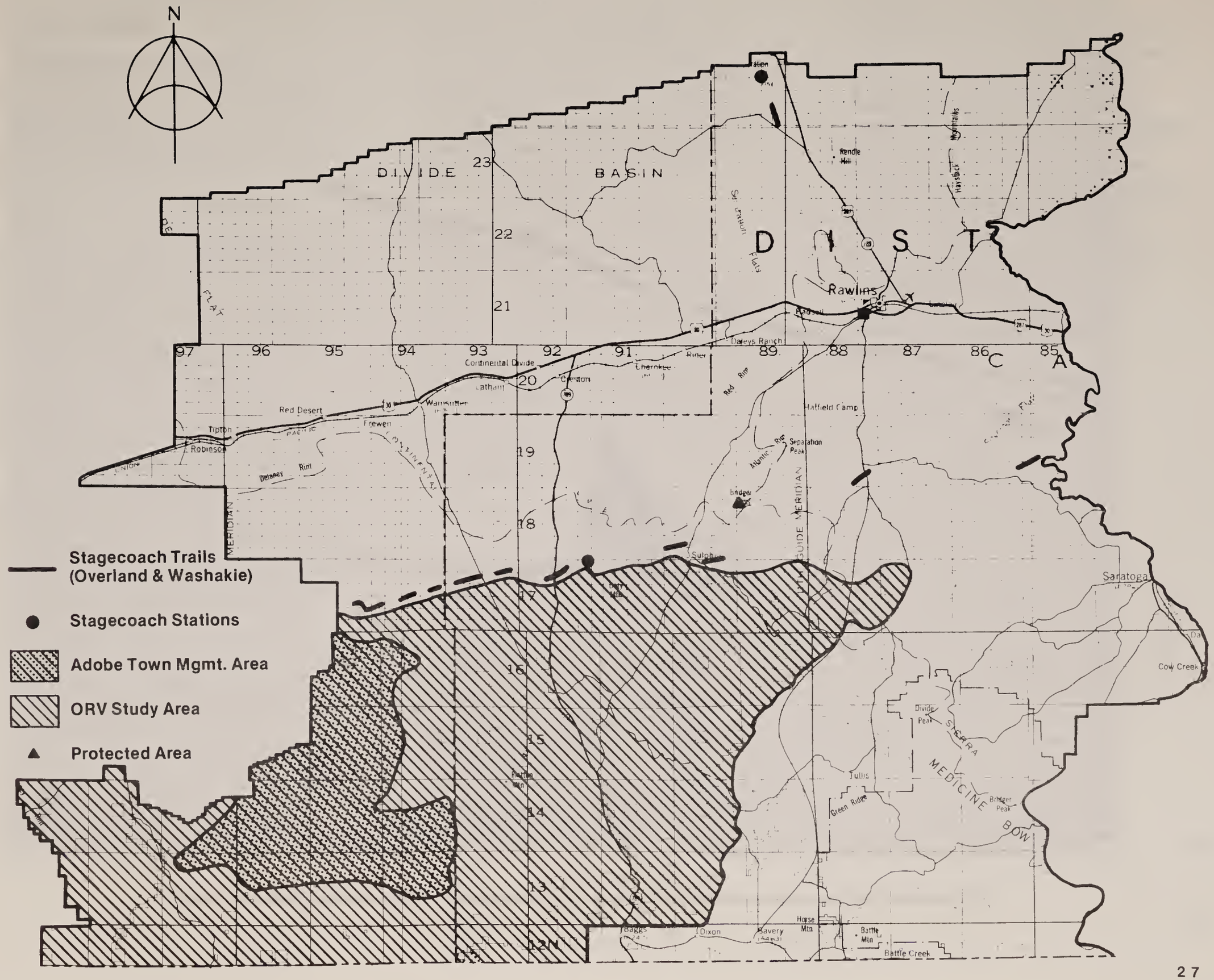
Multiple Use Decisions

1. **Preserve and protect the remnants of the Rawlins-Ft. Washakie Stage Route in Section 30 and the Separation Flats Station. No surface occupancy is allowed within a half-mile radius of the center of the trail or site or the visible horizon, whichever is closer.**
2. **Stabilize, protect and interpret the Washakie Stage Station on the Overland Trail. No surface occupancy is allowed within a half-mile radius or the visible horizon, whichever is closer.**
3. **Prohibit surface occupancy or disturbance on Overland Trail ruts and the Bridger Pass Historic Site. Reserve from occupancy on well preserved segments a strip one half mile wide on each side of the trail center or the visible horizon, whichever is closer.**

Rationale: 1&2. Disallowing surface occupancy for a half-mile radius or to the visible horizon will primarily affect oil and gas drilling as drill rigs will not be allowed to set up in zone. Drilling activity, depending on its proximity to a historic site can result in surface disturbance, noise, and activity that is inconsistent with the use of these areas in the historic context for educational, interpretation and recreational purposes. However, in this instance, a maximum of three sections is involved. Off-site slant drilling will be allowed.

3. This decision will also primarily affect oil and gas drilling by precluding setting a drill rig within the limits described. This restriction is desirable to preserve the historic theme of the trail and to prevent destruction of any of the actual running surface. Only 14 miles of trail are involved. It is possible that this will have negligible effect on drilling operations as off-site slant drilling is permitted. The Historic Preservation Act supports the preservation of a resource such as this which possesses national significance.

OVERLAND M.F.P.
RECREATION



Off-road vehicle use is a major problem in the Overland Unit. (Photo courtesy of the Wyoming Travel Commission)

Decisions

Multiple Use Objective

To manage those areas with unique natural features in a manner which will minimize surface disturbance and preserve the values present until final management decisions can be made.

Multiple Use Decision

Set the Adobe Town area aside as an "Interim Critical Management Area" until such time as inventory and analysis determine proper management guidelines. Surface disturbance should be kept to a minimum, consistent with the requirements of presently authorized uses. In the interim period, new access should be limited to that needed for oil and gas drilling operations. New roads should be located so as to minimize damage to natural values such as the Adobe Rim, and should be obliterated and reclaimed when not needed for production. Geophysical and exploration drilling activities should be controlled through specifications to protect natural values.

Rationale: The subject area is presently leased for oil and gas exploration and production. Some drilling is occurring at the present time. Restricting commercial activities is not feasible due to legal lease obligations. A majority of public opinion obtained at MFP workshops is not in favor of classification as a natural area.

Tighter restrictions on surface disturbance may slightly impact the exploration and production of oil and gas. However, the oil and gas industry has been cooperative in re-routing and reclaiming roads and relocating drilling sites to protect other resource values in the past. Some control of surface disturbance is necessary to preserve future management options.

Although there are some unique (geological, flora, and fauna) values in the Adobe area, their extent and location is not currently known to any degree. Other important resource values are also present (i.e., oil and gas, wildlife). Inventories and analysis will be required in order to determine a final management plan. In the interim (until 1980-1981) the status quo will be maintained through control of oil and gas activities, off-road vehicle use, and other surface-disturbing activity.

Decisions

Multiple Use Objective

To implement measures for control of road proliferation and off-road vehicle use that is presently occurring throughout the unit so as to minimize impacts to aesthetics, wildlife, watershed, and other resource values.

Multiple Use Decision

Implement protective measures including signing, education, physical blocking, rehabilitation and stipulation on authorizations. Conduct further studies in the identified area to determine needed closures and methods.

Rationale: Uncontrolled and unnecessary roads and trails and their use creates adverse effects on wildlife habitat, watershed and aesthetics. Many of these roads and trails have arisen from mineral exploration and development without proper stipulations as well as unregulated ORV use. The above measures will minimize these impacts when implemented. The public supports curtailing of unnecessary off-road vehicle activity in areas where resource damage is or potentially can be a problem. The area to be studied includes most of the better blocked lands within the unit, including the Adobe Town area and the better blocked areas of NRL southwest of Rawlins.

Management Decisions

WILDLIFE

Resource Description

The geographical area included in this Planning Unit is widely known for big game values. The Overland Planning Unit is perhaps the stronghold of antelope habitat. Mule deer range over two-thirds of the area, while elk have spread from the foothills around the National Forest north and west to Miller Hill, Atlantic Rim and even north of I-80. Black-footed ferrets have historically been found throughout the area, although confirmed habitats are unidentified (see wildlife map for crucial areas and stream fisheries).

Antelope populations have greatly increased since the early 1900's when competition from cattle and sheep, hunting pressures and severe winters left only scattered herds in Carbon County. Antelope are now the most conspicuous wildlife species in the Planning Unit. During summer seasons, antelope are scattered throughout the area. In the winter, they usually leave higher elevations for more protected areas at lower elevations. These crucial wintering areas are critical to their survival.

Primary conflicts with other grazing animals include competition for winter range with cattle, sheep and wild horses. Coal mining, oil and gas development and community expansion all affect habitat to some degree. Fencing creates a severe conflict for antelope, especially when coupled with deep snow.

Mule deer range over two-thirds of the Planning Unit, with migration patterns evolving from summer use in higher elevations of the forest to the lower south slopes, river bottoms and juniper areas in the winter. Much of the area is also subject to yearlong use. A total of 189,000 acres (55% of which is NRL) is considered crucial habitat. This acreage consists mostly of preferred winter range necessary to maintaining population levels. Primary conflicts for deer are similar to antelope, involving livestock, wild horses, fencing, mineral development and human disturbance. In addition, competition occurs to an unknown extent with the large elk herd in the southern part of the unit.

Elk herds have increased from near zero before 1953 to approximately 2,500 head. These elk graze the high elevation national forests in the summer and fall and spread north and west throughout about one-sixth of the Planning Unit in the winter. Some remain yearlong in the Planning Unit on Atlantic Rim, Miller Hill and in the Savery Valley.

Elk are extremely susceptible to human disturbances, such as coal and oil and gas mining activities and to snowmobile and four-wheel drive pursuits. Wild horses are increasing rapidly, using forage in crucial wintering areas important to survival of the elk. Major plans for coal development overlap crucial elk habitat in the Atlantic Rim, Savery Valley and Little Snake River Valley. Some 107,000 acres of elk habitat (mostly winter range) have been designated as crucial to their life-sustaining needs.

Several species of upland and small game occur within the Planning Unit. Cottontail rabbits are widespread throughout the area as are several non-game species (coyotes, jackrabbits, badgers, prairie dogs and others). Sage grouse are found in all parts of the Planning Unit and provide a very significant number of hunter days annually. Blue grouse are numerous around the fringes of the National Forest lands. Columbian sharptails and ruffed grouse are present in isolated population pockets.

Decisions

Multiple Use Objective (Crucial Areas and Habitat Protection)

Maintain and improve the quality of existing habitat with special attention to crucial areas (i.e., winter ranges, nesting areas and calving grounds) to support present population levels. The final objective is to set population levels in harmony with other resource values based on resource inventories yet to be completed.

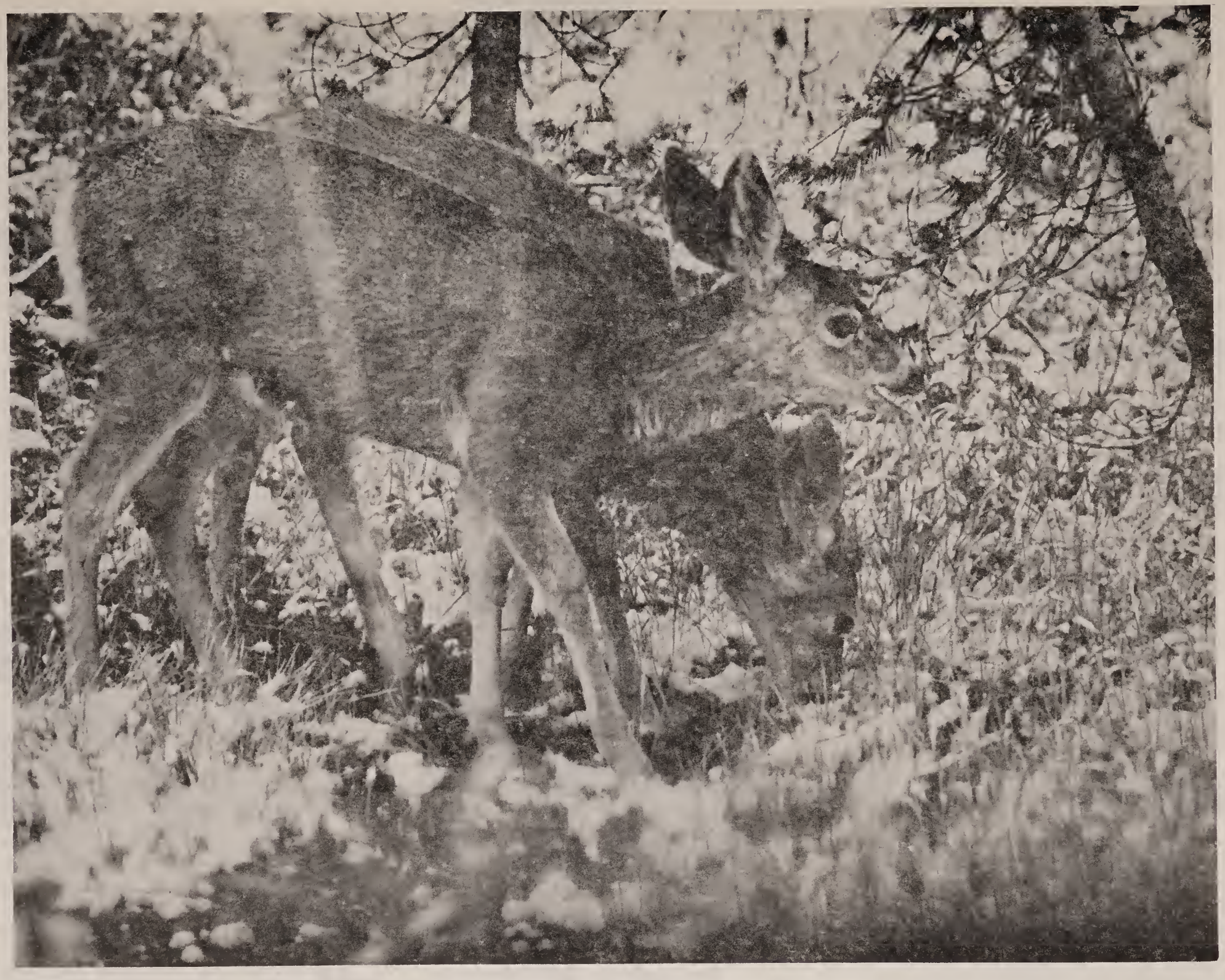
Multiple Use Decision (Crucial Areas)

Minimize destruction of vegetation in all identified crucial habitat areas by limiting surface use and disturbance in critical use seasons, requiring restoration or by reserving high value crucial areas from activities where impacts cannot be mitigated. Specific decisions supporting the above include:

- **Coal leases will not be issued on NRL containing significant acreages of winter elk habitat, nor on highly crucial deer winter ranges (see map).**
- **Restrict oil and gas drilling between December 15 and April 15 in elk, deer and antelope crucial winter ranges; from March 15 to June 30 in sage grouse nesting and strutting areas and require a minimum of 250 feet distance for drill site locations from any fisheries.**

Rationale: Crucial areas for deer, elk, antelope and sage grouse cover a major portion of the Planning Unit. These areas are essential to survival of the species due to certain food, cover or isolation requirements. Reduction or elimination of these areas usually affects wildlife populations on a much wider geographical area.

OVERLAND M.F.P.
WILDLIFE



Mule deer range over two-thirds of the Overland Unit. (Photo courtesy of the Wyoming Travel Commission)

Nationally important deposits of coal, oil and gas are distributed through most of the unit. Completely eliminating surface disturbance in crucial areas would have a region-wide impact on energy development and other resource programs. Many of the activities associated with these programs (i.e., rights-of-way, timber harvesting, coal mining) are limited in the area covered and the duration of disturbance. In many cases, rehabilitation measures maintain or improve site productivity. In other situations, reclamation is not feasible in terms of restoring crucial area characteristics. Considering these facts, oil and gas drilling is restricted in crucial big game winter ranges from December to April, and in nesting and strutting grounds during breeding and mating seasons. Coal leasing is allowed in antelope ranges in view of their tolerance levels, but not in the priority deer and elk crucial areas.

Multiple Use Decisions (Forage Allocation in Crucial Areas)

Make no reductions in livestock AUM's or season of use in wildlife crucial areas until the Wyoming Game and Fish and BLM, consulting with private landowners, jointly establish the number of elk, deer and antelope desired in the unit (as based on further acquisition of resource data).

Rationale: Resource inventories have not yet been completed in the detail required to set numbers of wildlife, livestock and wild horses. It is anticipated that the required data gathering will be completed by 1979 at which time allocations can be made. Reservations of forage could have severe impacts on the livestock industry in terms of reduction. Massive changes in livestock grazing patterns, as based on insufficient data, would bring questionable returns. To date, the crucial areas are in fair to good condition. The Wyoming Game and Fish has indicated that livestock grazing is not presently causing a problem.

Multiple Use Decisions (Water Sources)

Protect all crucial wildlife water sources from excessive livestock, wild horse, and mineral activity uses in the development of future management plans. New water sources may be developed within critical big game winter ranges only if in harmony with wildlife needs.

Rationale: Some water sources are being abused by heavy wild horse and mineral activities with some over-use by livestock. Wyoming Game and Fish and public sentiment are strongly in favor of protecting crucial components of the habitat. Elimination of water development within crucial winter ranges would have a drastic impact on future range management. The Bureau has not identified all water sources needing protection. The Bureau also does not have water rights in all sources that are needed.

Multiple Use Objective (Fence Construction)

To maintain existing or increased populations of antelope and deer by protecting the quality and quantity of habitat provided.

Multiple Use Decisions (Fence Construction)

Keep new fence construction to an absolute minimum. Design new fences and modify existing fences to accommodate the needs for antelope and deer movement.

Rationale: Some fencing is required to implement livestock grazing management systems necessary for desired range improvement. Fences can be designed and controlled to minimize interference with deer and antelope movement, and still meet the needs of livestock management. The public favors reasonable livestock control but not at the expense of wildlife.

Multiple Use Objective (Raptors and Endangered Species)

Protect, maintain and improve the habitat quality for all species of raptors present in the Planning Unit, and for existing or potential endangered species.

Multiple Use Decisions (Raptors and Endangered Species)

Prohibit the use of toxicants for control on insects, rodents, prairie dogs or other species used by raptors or endangered species. Maintain all areas with a density of 8 or more prairie dog towns of 30 acres or more in size per township until the presence or absence of the blackfooted ferret can be confirmed.

Rationale: Currently there is no significant use of toxicants for the above purposes; therefore, the impacts of the decision are insignificant. Toxicants can limit reproduction in addition to causing raptor mortality. In other areas, raptor populations have been severely decreased as a result of toxicants. The Overland Planning Unit provides premium habitat for wintering eagles, nesting areas for prairie falcons and ferruginous hawks and other raptors.

The blackfooted ferret recovery team has established the above criteria for ferret habitat in prairie dog areas crucial to the blackfooted ferret habitat. We assume the same criteria is satisfactory for white-tailed prairie dogs.

CUMULATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

Lands

The lands MFP decisions will prevent the proliferation of major transportation, communication, and utility rights-of-way across public lands. They are further designed to encourage the orderly growth and expansion of existing communities rather than favor development of new towns and camps in the vicinity of developing mining areas. The designation of the Adobe Town area as an Interim Critical Management Area will protect the area for possible inclusion in the wilderness system pending the outcome of studies to determine its future use.

Minerals

The minerals MFP decisions will result in impacts which are both beneficial and adverse. For example, the coal leasing decisions (subject to environmental statement findings) will put into production large amounts of badly needed energy for electrical power generation. Significant increases in employment opportunities will be noted along with increases in income and local tax revenues. Development of new services and shopping facilities will follow. On the other hand, housing will be in extremely short supply, mobile homes will proliferate, the cost of living will increase significantly and public services (schools, municipal facilities, etc.) will be unable to meet demands at least in the short run. The quality of life will be adversely affected in the short run and long-standing life styles will change due to rapid and significant population growth. Communities will sprawl in a helter-skelter manner if stringent, comprehensive land use guidelines are not imposed and enforced.

The MFP decisions relative to oil and gas are designed to encourage mineral exploration and development while protecting wildlife populations and habitat simultaneously. Less than one-tenth of one percent of the unit (NRL) has a no-surface occupancy restriction.

Planning decisions consider the protection of crucial habitat areas for elk, deer, antelope, and sage grouse by partial or total restriction of mining activity. However, mineral development will cause short term and some long-term destruction of wildlife habitat, mostly within the checkerboard land pattern and to the Savery area. Some wildlife population declines may result.

Livestock Forage

The livestock forage MFP decisions are designed to maximize use of the forage on national resource lands and minimize environmental damage. Some fences may be constructed which may create minimal obstructions to wildlife migrations. However, others will be modified to facilitate the movement of wildlife. Location of water developments will consider wildlife needs. Vegetation modification will not produce major adverse effect due to careful planning and layout.

Wild Horses

Wild horse management is designed to reduce and stabilize horse populations in harmony with other resource values. This would reduce future competition with wildlife and livestock for available forage. It would also provide a basis for stabilizing the environment and improving vegetative condition. It would also mean that fewer horses would be visible to the public.

Forestry

Forestry MFP decisions will cause only very minimal impacts which would be confined to minor surface disturbance, the interruption of natural visual patterns in the landscape, and temporary minor disturbance to wildlife. Beneficial impacts would similarly be minor and limited to the enhanced productivity of 542 acres of forested land.

Watershed

Minimal impacts will result from the MFP watershed decisions. They are limited to re-routing rights-of-way from critical areas, slightly increasing maintenance needs or increasing road construction costs to prevent erosion. Beneficial impacts expected to result are decreases in soil erosion and maintenance of water quality.

Recreation

Beneficial impacts expected from the recreation decisions are: maintained aesthetic quality along the highways in the Planning Unit and preservation of historic values along the Overland Trail and Rawlins-Ft. Washakie Stage Route. No significant adverse impacts are expected to result from MFP decisions.

Wildlife

The wildlife decisions are designed to benefit wildlife habitat and species, while in most cases not significantly impacting other resource programs. Recommendations are aimed at protection and improvement of crucial wildlife habitat areas such as big game winter ranges as well as nesting and strutting areas. Recommendations specifically consider vegetative cover, potential surface or noise disturbance, critical water sources, and management of livestock as it affects wildlife habitat. Some adverse impacts will be caused by restrictions on mineral development, both seasonal and permanent. Upon acquisition of added resource data in the near future, the wildlife part of the MFP will be revised to set specific population levels in context with other resource values.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PLANS

During development of the Overland MFP, a special effort was made to coordinate this plan with other Federal, State and local government officials. This was to ensure that BLM planning efforts and management decisions did not conflict with land use plans of other agencies. Agencies or government officials contacted during the planning process, in addition to the public meeting, include: U.S. Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Carbon County Commissioners, Carbon County Planning Commission, Sweetwater County Commissioners, Sweetwater County Planning Commission. Other adjacent BLM Districts were contacted to ensure interdistrict BLM plan coordination. On February 11, 1977, the major proposed decisions were also presented to Wyoming State agency officials in Cheyenne, with approximately 20 state department heads or their representatives in attendance. Decisions in the plan conform with local county zoning ordinances and also consider major land use proposals, such as the Bureau of Reclamation's Savery-Pothook plan.

Many of the decisions in the Overland MFP will have significant on and off-site implications affecting other agencies. Major decisions relative to coal development could foreseeably affect every agency mentioned above. For some government organizations, coal development on a large scale will no doubt create very significant workloads, especially for the State Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. Geological Survey. Decisions relative to making NRL available for urban expansion and public purposes should benefit local government concerned with future growth in several of the communities located within the Overland Unit. Intensifying livestock grazing will impact agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service, State Land Board and Forest Service which work with the same range users under their areas of jurisdiction. Range management practices affect wildlife populations either beneficially or adversely and this will have a direct impact on the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Existing procedures call for cooperative planning on range management by all agencies involved.

Wildlife management decisions have been coordinated closely with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to ensure that BLM management of the habitat is coordinated with the department's objective for each wildlife species.

These are some examples of the coordination which has taken place to date on some of the major issues.

Almost any decision made in this MFP process affects other government organizations and their land use plans.

ACTIONS AFTER THE MFP

This plan will be followed by on-the-ground actions based on the decisions listed. These actions are subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. An environmental assessment is prepared for each action whether it is initiated by industry or BLM. If the impacts are unacceptable, the proposed action may be modified or rejected.

The implementation of on-the-ground actions initiated by BLM is contingent upon the necessary funding by the Congress. It may be some time before some of these decisions are implemented.

This plan will be continually updated. As new resource information becomes available, as technology improves, as needs and demands change, and as law, regulations and policy change, this plan will be revised.

Any major changes in this plan will be subject to public review and comment.

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